

Issue Paper

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Breaking the Mold A New Paradigm for the Reserve Components

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Operation Desert Storm and subsequent deployments have made it clear that the Army must be able to deploy its forces rapidly to locations around the world, not just to Europe or Korea. Since then, the Department of Defense has addressed this issue and, indeed, has made substantial progress, procuring new aircraft and ships and bolstering deployment infrastructure. But deployment involves more than ports and planes. It requires trained and ready units, and here the situation provides less cause for optimism. For any major conflict, the United States will require a substantial complement of combat service and combat service support (CS/CSS) units, and the bulk of these units will have to come from the Reserve Components (RC). This Issue Paper argues that these units may not be as ready to deploy as they need to be, offers some observations about why that might be the case, and, by drawing some lessons from the reserve components of the other services, suggests some approaches to improve the readiness of these indispensable units to deploy.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

A number of things have changed since Desert Storm that call into question the ability of the RC to deploy needed CS/CSS units in time to support the war plans. First, the conditions of deployment have altered radically. During the Cold War, plans called for the RC to supplement an already-in-place active structure that was backed up by substantial host nation support. With the possible exception of a Korean conflict, none of these conditions will hold true for deployments today. Much of the support structure has been moved to the RC, to the point where it contains either all or the substantial majority of

some capabilities. For example, all water supply battalions reside in the RC, as do over 90 percent of civil affairs units and petroleum support battalions. Over 80 percent of psychological operations units are in the RC.¹ So in future deployments the task will not be a matter of supplementing an in-place and robust AC support structure. It will be much more a matter of deploying along with the AC and providing the bulk of the capability.

The requirement for the RC to provide more of the capability highlights another point of difference between today and the time of Desert Storm. Some of the RC logistical support that deployed during the Gulf War was in the form of lower-level units, e.g., sections, platoons, and companies. These were attached to higher-level AC units, which provided the necessary command and control. Since much of the capability has migrated to the RC, those units will have to provide the command and control, in many ways a more demanding task than supplying only the operational elements.

Furthermore, the Army's flexibility has declined considerably since Desert Storm. A smaller RC—down almost 25 percent since Desert Storm—coupled with a greater demand means that a larger portion of the RC is needed.² Thus, it is not as easy to pick and choose among units as it was during Desert Storm, when a less ready unit could be passed over for a more ready one.

¹U.S. Department of Defense, *Reserve Component Programs: Fiscal Year 1998 Report of the Reserve Forces Policy Board*, Washington, D.C., 1999, p. 9.

²U.S. Department of Defense, *DoD Selected Manpower Statistics FY 1994*, Washington, D.C., 1995, Table 5-1, p. 202.

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Finally, more RC units are needed than in Desert Storm, and they are needed sooner. Well over 100,000 CS/CSS reservists need to be in place by the 75th day of a contingency for a major conflict.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IS NOT PROMISING

Despite the need, the readiness of the RC CS/CSS units does not appear to support their ability to be trained and ready to deploy early (indeed, earlier than many AC units). In large measure, this results because the thinking of both the active and reserve components with respect to the reserves has not kept pace with changes in strategic thinking. It remains largely in a Cold War mold, that is, to maintain units at home station at some reduced level of readiness and, on activation, bring them to a mobilization station and raise them to the readiness standards set by the AC and the Commanders-in-Chief (CINCs). But what worked well for the Cold War will not necessarily serve today.

Another part of the problem stems from an institutional focus, preoccupation even, on combat units. The combat mission, particularly the synchronization that must occur at the brigade and higher levels, is exceptionally difficult. It requires a well-trained unit to perform it. That training, which involves expensive equipment and plenty of time to practice with it, is enormously costly compared with the less complex training needed by CS/CSS units. The resources thus gravitate toward the combat units, along with the leadership's attention. For instance, the enhanced separate brigades of the National Guard receive additional support in the form of personnel and training funds. But this focus should be broadened if the criterion is what is needed from the RC first.

The obvious solution to both aspects of the problem is to break this paradigm, and the way to break it is to regard the RC—or at least the portions of it needed to support CINC war plans—as being as important as Active Component (AC) units, manned, trained, modernized, and ready to deploy. Recent research by the RAND Arroyo Center examined the reserve elements of the Air Force and Marine Corps, both of which have very ready reserve units, to determine if any of their practices or procedures might be used by the Army to improve the readiness of its RC.

HOW THE AIR FORCE AND MARINE CORPS RESERVE COMPONENTS MAINTAIN HIGH READINESS

Drawing comparisons among the reserve components of the different services is problematic for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is size. The Air Force and Marine Corps have much smaller RC than does the Army. Counting both National Guard and Reserve elements, the

Army RC totals well over 500,000, while the Air Force and Marine Corps have 181,000 and 40,000 respectively.³ That said, both services have responsive RC units, and it is instructive to see how they achieve that responsiveness. Three characteristics stand out: number of full-time military people at the unit level, amount and quality of equipment, and seamlessness with the AC.

The Marine Corps establishes a significant AC presence at the unit level—platoon, company, battalion. At the company level, the key chain of command positions, such as commander, first sergeant, and supply, administration, and maintenance noncommissioned officers, are backed up by a shadow chain of command composed primarily of active duty marines, typically 9 or 10 at the company level. The Marine Corps does not assign civilians or marines who cannot deploy. The focus is on company and platoon skills required in combat, and the units devote little time to peacetime administrative matters during drill periods. Normally, 9 to 10 of the 12 weekend drills during the year take place away from the reserve center. AC marines plan and evaluate this training, and they do it to AC standards. The full-time personnel attend to the administrative matters during the periods between drills. Of interest is the fact that the RC assignments in the Marine Corps are seen as career enhancing.

Furthermore, the reserve unit has nearly all its authorized equipment, and it interfaces seamlessly with the AC. Typically, Marine Corps reserve units have 99 percent of their authorized equipment, and it is standard with that of the AC. The data systems for finance, logistics, and personnel mirror those used in the fleet. The use of common data systems eases administrative friction, especially during mobilization. Indeed, the connection is so seamless that the Marine Corps does not plan for any substantial postmobilization preparation. Getting ready to deploy is much more a process of making final checks than it is of raising the unit to another level of readiness.

The Air Force places even more emphasis on the level of full-time support provided to its RC units. More than 50,000 people provide full-time support to the Air Force's RC. Most are members of the RC and hold key leadership positions while serving full time.

Like the Marine Corps, the Air Force National Guard and Reserves have their own equipment, which matches that of the AC, and they use the same data systems as the AC. They do not use mobilization stations. Deployment, typically of part of the unit, takes place from home station. RC crews meet the same proficiency standards—drawn from the same regulations—as do the AC crews. This higher level of readiness is purchased at a relatively high cost in terms of time committed. Flight crews typically

³Reserve Component Programs, p. 52.

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serve more than 100 days per year, and maintenance personnel about 60 days. An indication of the importance accorded this program is the level of resources provided: adequate funds are available to support this level of commitment.

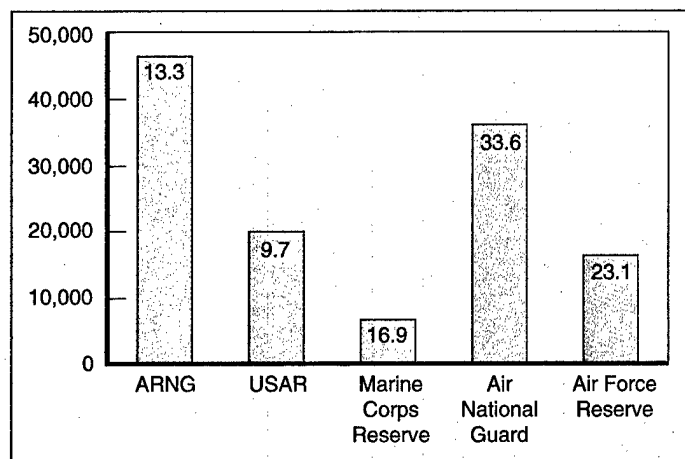
HOW DOES THE ARMY COMPARE?

The sheer size of the Army RC means that adopting either the Marine Corps or Air Force model would be expensive. A more affordable option, however, might be to adopt key aspects of those programs, potentially with great benefit to readiness. For instance, the Army could improve the level of full-time support it provides at the unit level. Although the Army has the lowest level of full-time support to the RC when measured as a percentage of RC end strength, it has the highest number of full-timers supporting the RC. The figure shows the number of full-time support personnel in the ARNG, USAR, Marine Corps Reserve, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve.⁴ The number at the top of each bar indicates the percentage of authorized end strength that the full-time personnel represent. The Army RC have a smaller percentage of their authorized end strength dedicated to full-time support. Over 66,000 people support the Army RC full time. This figure does not include the approximately 5,000 AC soldiers who support the RC while assigned to AC organizations such as the Training Support Brigades.

Those providing full-time support to the Army RC are distributed very differently from the other services. Precise numbers are difficult to come by, but we estimate that less than one-quarter of the 66,000 people assigned are at the company level or below. Many are assigned to TDA organizations or are not otherwise associated with a specific unit they would accompany on deployment.

Furthermore, most of those who are assigned to company level and below are military technicians or enlisted personnel. The people assigned at these levels tend to have administrative or maintenance skills. Other than medical personnel, few officers or warrant officers serve at these levels.

Both the distribution and type of personnel providing full-time RC support may not be optimal for enhancing readiness. Previous Arroyo Center research showed that the RC believed full-time support would be best used for better planning and more effective execution of weekend



How Full-Time Support Personnel Are Assigned

drills.⁵ Accomplishing these goals implies placing more and different types of people at the lower levels. Experienced military trainers who can help plan and conduct training could go a long way toward improving readiness. Personnel to boost the numbers at unit level could be reassigned, perhaps from AC units engaged in RC support or RC TDA organizations. The grade and skill mix of personnel providing full-time support would have to change. The overall number might have to increase.

However, full-time support is not the only issue. AC and RC units have serious equipment and system incompatibilities. For example, some CS and CSS units from the RC have radios that do not mesh with those of the AC. Nor are the incompatibilities limited to high-technology or sophisticated systems. Many RC units have M16A1 rifles that fire a different type of ammunition from the M16A2, the standard weapon for AC forces. When it comes to data systems, the AC, the Army Reserve, and the National Guard all use different ones. These incompatibilities extend the time it takes to make the RC units able to interoperate with AC units and, of course, lengthen post-mobilization preparation. Furthermore, once the unit deploys, incompatible systems such as military payroll often continue to cause friction.

WHAT TO DO?

Given the large size of the Army RC, it would not be possible to bring it quickly to the same level of readiness as the RC of the other services. Nor is it necessary. The Army does not have to raise the readiness of every unit in its RC to match the AC. But it could improve the readiness of selected units, and each RC practices tiered readiness to some degree. Which units would be determined by CINC and supporting war plans. Put another way, the

⁴U.S. Department of Defense, *Reserve Component Programs: FY 1998*, Washington, D.C., March 1999, Table 3-5, p. 54. The figure shows full-time support (FTS) personnel as a percentage of authorized end strength. Considering FTS as a percentage of FTS required yields the following: ARNG, 58 percent; USAR, 59 percent; Marine Corps, 100 percent; Air National Guard, 88 percent; and Air Force Reserve, 94 percent. The other services are authorized a substantially higher percentage of the required strength.

⁵See Ronald Sortor et al., *Training Readiness in the Army Reserve Components*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, MR-474-A, 1994.

Army could adopt a tiered readiness system based on war plans. It already has a de facto tiered readiness system with the Force Support Program. This approach recommends tying support to war plans more directly.

Such an approach would divide units into three categories: early deploying (to include enabling units, i.e., those needed early to help with deployment), later deploying, and not in the war plans. Units needed early would be indistinguishable from AC units in terms of equipment and would have all required equipment and personnel. Furthermore, they would have substantial full-time support and enjoy training of both better quality (enabled by the full-time support) and more quantity if required (i.e., training for more than the 39 days per year typical of most RC units). Units not needed as early would function pretty much as the units in the Force Support Program do now, with somewhat lower levels of equipment and personnel and a lower level of training dollars than the first-tier units. Units not in the war plans would receive equipment and personnel as available and would receive last priority for training dollars.

Some—but clearly not all—of the resources required to carry out this program could be drawn from current authorizations. For example, full-time support could be

shifted to early-deploying platoons, companies, and battalions. The additional support might be found by assuming somewhat greater risk in those TOE units that do not figure into war plans or in TDA organizations.⁶ The Training Support Battalions could be configured to provide more support to early-deploying CS/CSS units, or they could integrate personnel with the unit. It might also be necessary to establish an assessment system to monitor the readiness of the early-deploying units so that the pre- and postmobilization resources and programs could be adjusted.

However, the reality is that more resources will be needed. To get additional resources will require a united front on the part of the Army Reserve, the National Guard, and the Active Army. A common strategy strongly supported by the three organizations could have a potent influence on the Office of the Secretary of Defense and Congress. Key to all of this, however, is shattering the old mold of the RC and recasting a new one in which the line between the AC and RC virtually disappears for those units needed early.

⁶The numbers required to make a difference are not necessarily large. For example, to have 10 FTS personnel in the companies in Force Package 1 of the FSP would require no more than 3,500 people.

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